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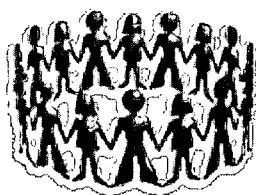
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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on how parents, childcare personnel, preprimary and primary educators, and governments all have a role to play in supporting children's early literacy development. For two decades early childhood and literacy education journals have been filled with explorations about the perennial questions which relate to the relationships between home, childcare, preprimary, and school in the formation of children's early literacy outcomes. Literacy learning is a complex social practice which is shaped by the social and literacy practices in which children engage from 0 to 8 years of age. It is also known that literacy learning does not always occur in a linear and predictable manner, that the different ways children are able to take what is available to them when they go to school is strongly mediated by the literacy experiences they have from the time they are born. This paper draws on "100 Children Go to School," a National Literacy Research project funded by DETYA (Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs), to explore how some children are able to make a seamless transition to early literacy whilst others, whose everyday home and preschool experiences do not fit with the expectations of preprimary and primary school literacy routines, find this transition far more difficult. It describes how some children go to school knowing much more about words than others. Also, it discusses how children's life circumstances related to family physical and mental health, poverty, and employment impacts on the capacity of some children to take up the literacy opportunities offered by schools. (Contains 16 references.) (Author/NKA)

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# Darwin Conference Paper



## Learning To Be Literate: So Whose Responsibility Is It?

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### Abstract

This paper will on focus on how parents, childcare personnel, preprimary and primary educators and governments all have a role to play in supporting children's early literacy development. Over the past two decades early childhood and literacy education journals have been filled with explorations about the perennial questions which relate to the relationships between home, childcare, preprimary and school in the formation of children's early literacy outcomes. Literacy learning is a complex social practice which we know is shaped by the social and literacy practices in which children engage from 0 to 8 yrs of age (Wells, 1983; Heath, 1993) . We also know that literacy learning does not always occur in a linear and predictable manner; that the different ways children are able to take what is available to them when they go to school is strongly mediated by the literacy experiences they have from the time they are born. This paper will draw on a *100 Children Go to School*, a National Literacy Research project funded by DETYA, to explore how some children are able to make a seamless transition to early literacy whilst others, whose everyday home and preschool experiences do not fit with the expectations of preprimary and primary school literacy routines, find this transition far more difficult. It will describe how some children go to school knowing much more about words than others. As well, it will discuss how children's life circumstances related to family physical and mental

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health, poverty and employment impacts on the capacity of some children to take up the literacy opportunities offered by schools.

## Introduction

A recent DETYA research project *100 Children Go To School* (1998) completed with my colleagues, Susan Hill, Barbara Comber, William Loudon and Joanne Reid raised a number of issues about early literacy development. Some of these issues will be used in this paper to investigate the topic: *Learning to be Literate: So whose responsibility is it?* I intend to cover this subject in the following ways.

Firstly, I will analyse this question and posit some possible answers to it. Secondly, I will look at the considerable body of knowledge about what is involved in supporting the development of literacy, which has been clearly established over the past 20 years. Thirdly, based on the data collected from the abovementioned DETYA national study, I will tell the story of one child's successful literacy development; and finally I will then use this story to draw some conclusions about how we might best provide support for the children with whom we work in order to facilitate their literacy development.

However, before I go any further I would like to clarify what I mean by learning to be literate. I do not mean the narrow view of literacy provided by Dr Kemp's Benchmarks (1999) – rather I mean a literacy which will open up possibilities for children who will grow up in a multimodal world. A literacy which encourages children to be aware of the values in all texts; a literacy which recognises that technology can reshape the social relations of doing literacy. Here I refer to a literacy which will provide children with the resources to break the code of written, visual or multimodal texts, which focuses on the meanings of these texts and which will provide children with the social capital and critical awareness to make use of these texts within appropriate contexts.

## Whose Responsibility?

The title of this paper, *Learning to be Literate: So whose responsibility is it?* is neither novel or new. Serendipity and time appear to drive us back to an examination of this question on a regular basis. In 1981 at the Seventh National Reading Conference and the first National Reading Conference to be held in Darwin the topic of the Preconference Institute was *Learning to read: whose responsibility?* Two great educators responded to this question in

differing ways. The late Garth Boomer (Boomer, 1982) claimed: "Children should be responsible for learning to read. Or to broaden the principle, the learner should, indeed must be responsible, must own, the learning." He went on to suggest: "too many people in western society are wanting to be responsible for children with the consequence that children become either perversely resentful or placid dramatis personae in an adult generated script". He later continued:

What if we brutally, confidently expected each child to learn to read and proceeded as if this would occur? What if we took responsibility for being fully ourselves (including being ourselves as literate adults) and for giving children access to what we know and can do?  
p.44

At the same forum Tough (1982) a much admired and well known researcher and educator from the UK made the claim that:

The conditions that children face as they are involved in learning to read affect the responses they can make to that experience. In my view, then, responsibility for learning to read is shared by all who in any way determine the conditions under which learning to read proceeds.p.42

She went on to point out:

That our aim must be to provide conditions that lead children to become independent readers, able to take responsibility for their own reading. If this is not achieved, then we fail, since only in this way can learning to read bring access and support to the educational process. But this is very different from saying that learning to read is essentially the responsibility of children. Children are not in a position in school or at home to take decisions about the conditions in which they will learn to read. p.42

There is much we can learn from these two great educators, although today we talk about becoming literate, that is to effectively make meaning, critically analyse and compose written, visual and computer texts, rather than learning to read. I suggest that all of us, whoever we are, if we have anything to do with children or make decisions or policies about children, are responsible for helping them become literate. By this I mean: parents, childcare workers, preprimary, kindergarten or school teachers, relatives, members of the community, policy makers and governments. It is our responsibility, because in the current world in which we live, it is almost impossible for children to access any sort of social power if

they are not literate. Not only are they unlikely to find employment, they are unlikely to be able to communicate effectively with others, to share in their cultural heritage, and as well they will be badly equipped to critique the barrage of information with which we are confronted on a daily basis through the media, the computer and even the information which ends up in our letter boxes. Those members of our society who are unable to access these texts critically are likely to be the meat (or perhaps polony) in the sandwich for the politicians, the image makers, the computer giants and the media moguls.

Importantly, we must recognise that the differing contexts and conditions in which children grow up impact dramatically on the ease with which children are likely to access literacy. Thus when we are working with children who through no fault of their own do not have the economic, educational or linguistic resources available to support their development towards literacy, in the same way as do other children, it is the responsibility of childcare personnel, community workers, preprimary, kindergarten and school teachers, educational policy makers and governments to help provide the resources which will allow those children to access that which occurs with relative ease for many children.

In the effort to facilitate children's development toward literacy it is important, as Garth Boomer reminds us, not to make literacy learning into a chore, which will "turn children off", rather than to allow them to participate in the challenging and fulfilling world of the literacy game. The message for us here is that when helping children participate in learning to be literate we need to do so in ways which are joyous, significant and relative for all children (not just the ones who already receive lots of support at home), so that those first tenuous steps towards literacy do not become the focus of competing interests or tedious and repetitious activities.

## **A Convergence of Research**

To help us focus on why it is so important for all of us to be involved in supporting children's development in literacy, let us look at some consistently established facts about the acquisition of literacy. In 1998 at the International Reading Conference in Orlando, Keith Stanovich pointed out that: over the last thirty years a strong and constant body of knowledge has been established that shows quite clearly how literacy development is closely linked to the following two major issues:

1. Children who become literate with ease have had a great deal of experience with numerous written texts from the time that they are very young. Thus they have been read to frequently,

had the opportunity to examine the nature of a range of texts and have been able to explore the meanings of those texts with a supportive mentor.

2. As well we know children's literacy development is strongly linked to the metalinguistic knowledge associated with knowing how words are made up of a number of different sounds and knowing how these sounds can be mapped onto written symbols. That is successful literacy learners have phonological awareness as well as code breaking skills.

In summary then we know that children who have been read to regularly all of their lives, who have developed phonological awareness and who know how to decode will in most cases learn to read effectively.

### **Literacy As A Social Practice**

We also know from the work of Wells (1983), Heath (1993), Rivalland (1994), Cairney et al (1995) Louden and Rivalland (1995) and Hill et al (1998) that children's literacy practices are shaped by the social interactions of those around them, and that the different ways children are able to take what is available to them when they go to school is strongly mediated by the literacy experiences they have from the time they are born.

Thus, we know that whilst almost all children participate in meaningful and powerful oral and written language interactions in their homes, we also know that these home literacy practices are likely to privilege some children over others when they begin participating in the discourses of school and work; that is, the ways of thinking, behaving, believing and talking in those contexts (Gee, 1990). This is not to suggest that particular home practices are better than others, and we must be very cautious not to interpret this data in such a way. Rather it signals that those of us who work with young children, need to be alert to giving all children access to the literacy practices and ways of talking which allow children to participate successfully in school learning, whilst at the same time not devaluing the differing discourses of home which some children bring to school with them. Helping children learn how to shift from one discourse to another is critical if we are serious about providing any sort of equity in the opportunities children have to access literacy and power in the world outside.

In fact our record on this matter is not very good - despite millions of dollars being spent in priority schools programs, we can still predict with frightening accuracy those children who are likely to be



less successful in accessing literacy than others. They are most likely to be those children whose home literacy practices and oral language patterns differ most markedly from those practices valued and used in school learning (Rivalland, 1994).

## **Literacy As A Technology**

We also know, as Allan Luke (1992) reminds us, that literacy is a technology; a study of the way written and visual scripts provide meanings. A technology which has specific attributes that learners must consciously understand if they are to become effective literacy learners. Thus the notion that literacy is natural is mistaken. Unlike talking, which most children will learn to do so long as they are provided with human interaction, effective literacy learning requires the conscious awareness of sounds, letters, the ways in which texts provide meaning, knowledge about forms of text and the capacity to recognise the ways in which texts provide particular values and perspectives about the world. In fact one of the most difficult tasks for children when they are learning to write is their capacity to understand how, in written texts, the writer must provide the contextual knowledge which is self evident in oral interactions.

Thus it appears that, some of the pedagogy of the past 20 years which led us to believe that so long as children were immersed in literate events and provided with effective modelling then they would all become successful literacy learners, may have been slightly misleading. I do not mean to infer here that children, when provided with worthwhile interactions with texts, do not learn a great deal from discovering things about written texts for themselves. Nor do I mean that teaching should be a matter of skills and drills or didactic teaching. Of course we have very good examples of children who have worked out the literacy puzzle for themselves - those children whose oral language patterns match with school language patterns and who have been gifted with a strong sense of problem solving, a natural instinct for code breaking and an intense motivation to gain the content and knowledge of texts and who have had helpful parents who answer their questions.

However this is not the case for most children. Literacy learning needs to include careful monitoring of development by highly skilled mentors, adults or teachers, so that development is not left to chance. This needs to include modelling, scaffolding and explicit discussion about aspects of print and meaning when it is evident that some children need support in order to become consciously aware of the knowledge they have not yet acquired.

It also must include the provision of many and varied opportunities for children to experience these skills long before they may be able to actually carry them out for themselves, as well as many opportunities for children to recognise that there are real bonuses in being able to win the literacy game.

Thus those of us who work with children in childcare, preprimary as well as the early years of school all have a responsibility to consciously and regularly engage children in activities which will provide the basis for learning to be literate, even when students may not necessarily self select or choose these activities for themselves. I will return to this point later in the discussion.

### **Working with Parents**

We also have a responsibility to work with parents in such a way that they understand how to help children with literacy so that they will be able to access school and institutional literacy practices. But this needs to be done in such a way that we do not devalue some of the home literacy practices which may be valued and valid ways of doing literacy in children's own homes and communities.

The work of Wolfgramm, McNaughton and Afeaki (1997) provides an excellent model for this type of work. They have worked with Samoan parents in New Zealand where the home literacy practices have been strongly shaped by the religious practices of the parents. These home literacy practices often focus on recitation, memory and performance. Practices which do not necessarily give easy access to school literacy practices. In this work, discussion with the parents focused on the notion of 'reading differently' in a range of contexts. How, if they wanted their children to successfully access school literacy they needed to be inducting them into some particular ways of doing reading for school purposes, which differed from the ways of reading the children learned in church and the community. However, rather than devaluing the family literacy practices, this study focussed on providing these children with "textual dexterity" with the idea of adding an additional "style" of reading to the family repertoire of literacy practices.

Jennifer Jayatalika (1998) a recent Masters graduate from Edith Cowan has also carried out some interesting work with parents. She negotiated the content of parent workshops carried out with preprimary parents in a very low socio-economic school. Using this process she was able to help these parents recognise all of the useful literacy practices which were already being used in their homes, while at the same time providing them with some additional ways of



supporting their children's move to school literacy. This process also provided her with excellent insights into how to link preprimary literacy activities with the home literacy of the children and so build a bridge into literacy for these students.

### **The Impact of Social Circumstances**

The next point I want to make relates to the complexity of home circumstances in which children in modern western democracies now live. The social changes which now see one in three Australian marriages end in divorce, as well as the evidence of an increasingly large underclass, mean that many children do come from homes where poverty, ill-health or other forms of social breakdown are part of their lives. Nowadays we must expect that children in these circumstances are likely to be found in every childcare centre, kindergarten, preprimary or school class. Much of the responsibility for these children's literacy development most frequently falls on those people who are responsible for caring for these children in the institutional settings of childcare, preprimary and schools.

The challenge for governments, policy writers and educators is to resource these institutions in such a way that powerful forms of literacy can be made available to all children, most particularly those children who are already marked with the inequities of poverty, illness and other forms of social inequity. No longer can any of us who are involved with childcare, preschools or schools be excused for blaming the homes and parents of these children, because such children make up a large sector of our population. Finding ways of connecting to the interests and literate practices of these children is an essential part of the early literacy work to be done by all of us who work with children.

### **What We Can Learn From 100 Children Going To School**

The recent DETYA study carried out with my colleagues Susan Hill and Barbara Comber from the University of South Australia, William Loudon from Edith Cowan University and Joanne Reid from the University of Ballarat published in *100 Children Go to School*, reports on how children make the transition from home, to childcare, preprimary and school. In this research quantitative measures of children's progress as they moved from preprimary to Year 1 were collected. As well 20 case study children were selected to record the qualitative literacy and social practices about what it was like for these children as they made the transition from home, sometimes to childcare, then preschool and Year 1. This qualitative data gives us specific insights into the things which make a

difference in early childhood settings. These findings provide further evidence to support the points which have already been elaborated. In summary the case studies in this research indicated that:

1. Some children can do a lot more with words than others when they begin school - and that this gap widens rather than diminishes as children start school
2. Knowing how to access what schools have to offer about literacy is closely linked to children having the social capital of knowing those particular ways of talking and engaging in literacy which are sanctioned by schools.

Thus the project attempted to identify the repertoires of behaviours, dispositions, attitudes and knowledges which count in particular school sites. To illustrate some of these I would like to tell you the story of one of these children: the social capital she took to school with her and the particular ways she was able to access what school had to offer.

### **What We Can Learn From Tessa**

The data for this particular case was collected by Barbara Comber not myself, but I have chosen to discuss this particular child today because unlike some of the other case study children who made a successful transition to school literacy, she did not attend a school in a high socio-economic area where the school and many of the parents provided an enormous fund of educational, social, economic and linguistic resources. When Barbara first met Tessa she was 4 years 7 months, one of the youngest children in the study.

Tessa went to a school of 284 children in an inner Adelaide suburb. The school is epitomised by cultural diversity, with 102 children from NESB backgrounds and 154 children on School Card, an index in South Australia for low income. There were also some young professional families in the school who were seeking to live close to the city. Tessa was in one of four multi-age groups which were composite Reception/Year 1/Year 2 classes.

Tessa is the middle child in a family with an older and younger brother. English was spoken in her home and Greek at her grandparent's house. Her mother was a part-time High School teacher and her father an accountant. Her grandparents collected her from preschool and looked after her when her mother worked. Tessa's mother had attended the same school when she was young and her father had grown up in the area.

Tessa's life was closely connected to the Greek community, she

spoke Greek and was learning to read and write in Greek in a morning class before she had even begun school. The family engaged in many communal literacy activities including board games, reading, watching TV and videos. As well Tessa had always enjoyed many self-initiated literacy activities which were supported by her family as well as her grandparents. She had even been allowed to draw and write on one of the walls of the house. She was interested in languages, could write many of the Greek and English alphabet letters before starting school and was learning Italian numbers and vocabulary from the Italian community and her next door neighbour.

At preschool Tessa demonstrated that she knew how to make evident to the teacher her competency with literacy as she played with the computer, spelt out words and wrote the names of all of her family. She did not have a computer at home, so what she could do, she had learned at school. She knew how to initiate, manage and direct the role playing games she played at preschool.

Her competence with beginning literacy and her knowledge of how to display this knowledge resulted in her receiving extra one-on-one literacy instruction during incidental play contexts in the preschool. She knew how to accept and work with the interventions of the preschool teacher and in so doing, she received specific literacy instruction designed to her needs. When the class was involved in more formal story reading, chants and rhymes, Tessa was not always compliant - however her lack of compliancy was usually overlooked because of her expertise in literacy related activities.

This experience in preschool enabled her to quickly pick up the pedagogical routines and verbal displays which were required in order to participate in the school classroom routines, although at first some of these routines provided some puzzlement for Tessa. She made the transition to school with relative ease, and was attentive to pedagogical opportunities which were made available in the very exciting learning environment of the classroom.

In preschool, at 4 years: 7 months, despite being one of the youngest children, Tessa already performed above the mean in many of the test categories, such as logographic knowledge, attention to print, book orientation, number identification, punctuation, letter identification and book reading. When assessed at 5 yrs and 3 months Tessa had made some dramatic gains across most measures and performed well above the mean on others. She could identify many words out of context, write, and produce three sentences on the computer.

So let us examine what made this transition for Tessa so comfortable?

- Rich and diverse language practices in two languages
- Tessa's family answered her questions and showed her how to make her letters and read to her regularly
- She was encouraged by the teachers to use this knowledge when she moved to preschool and then school
- She actively participated in learning how languages and print were encoded. Because she already knew much about print she was able to access school knowledge readily and because she knew a lot about book knowledge she was able to predict story lines and dictate appropriate sentences for her teachers to scribe.
- She was able to work out how to participate in the pedagogic routines of both the institution of preschool and school
- She was able to manage and organise herself effectively so that when she moved into the formal settings of preschool and school she was able to manage the many organisational routines of these institutional settings.
- She was able to display her competence with beginning literacy to her parents and teachers in such a way that she attracted specific pedagogical feedback and instruction to further develop her already precocious skills. Thus she accessed extra resourcing from responsive adults.
- She was always involved in a large repertoire of linguistic and literate practices, with her parents, her grandparents and her Italian neighbours.
- Her bilingualism was valued as part of the funds of knowledge which made up the preschool and school communities.

### **Supporting Literacy Learning**

What can this tell us about the responsibilities we all have, to help children in a range of ways, to take responsibility for learning to be literate. It tells us we need to support the important roles of :

- making children feel confident about their early language and literacy experiences
- helping children actively enquire into the nature of languages not just the English language
- responding to children's questions about print and stories in sometimes quite explicit ways which will help them understand the literacy puzzle or become a 'literacy detective'
- reading and discussing a range of print materials including stories, computer and TV, community and environmental texts
- drawing attention of children to sounds, words and letters even when they may not yet show a great deal of interest in these aspects of literacy

- encouraging children to make the best use of all of the available language and linguistic resources which can be accessed as part of the community
- encouraging teachers to inform themselves about the interests and literacy practices their children enjoy and participate in both at home and in the community
- helping children learn to be independent and effective managers and organisers of their belongings.

It also tells those of us who work with young children either in childcare, kindergarten, preschools or the early school years, that in all of these settings we need to be systematically and routinely ensuring that these same things are made available to all children, whatever the context in which we work.

There is an important requirement for us also to make every possible effort to connect into the language, interests and literacy practices found in the homes and community of the children with whom we work. In this way we not only validate children's home lives but we can also provide a bridge between home and school language and literacy practices, which for many children is a critical link to successful school literacy. This may often require the building of strong and trusting relationships with parents. Relationships where we are genuinely interested in what literacy practices and interests are present in homes, rather than relationships which judge parents for not acting like teachers, or for perceived deficits which may be out of the control of many parents.

As well we must be persistently reminding educational authorities, policy makers and governments that if we are to take our responsibilities seriously then childcare, preprimary and the early years of school all need to be resourced adequately so that we have the time to make such opportunities available to all children. Perhaps, it is worth noting here that one of the most under-resourced areas are the first three critical years at school. It is this aspect of childcare and schooling which is most poorly resourced when this is the area where we know that in many ways literacy success is determined.

### **More Than The Teachable Moment**

However as professionals we have an even greater responsibility to ensure that learning to be literate is not left to chance. This means that there needs to be a continuous process of vigilance related to what we notice about the progress children are making towards literacy and the planning necessary to ensure that all children are provided with contexts which will ensure that they begin to enquire into the nature of print, develop appropriate vocabulary, become

aware of the sounds of the English language, learn about letters and words and understand and respond to what they are read in a meaningful and joyful manner.

Of course for very young children this needs to be done in playful settings and through the use of texts which will make important connections between home and school literacy practices. However we must always be mindful that not all children come to us with the Tessa's capacity to display her need for and to take from the literacy interventions of adults.

Many children will not know how to indicate that they need some pedagogical intervention or support. So if we are going to give every child a chance, we need to make an effort to regularly engage all children individually, in small groups and through whole group activities, with print related experiences which will allow them to move toward understanding the complex literacy puzzle. Vygotsky (1978) reminds us that individual cognition emerges out of social interaction. He says:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice, or on two planes. First, it appears on the social plane and then on the psychological plane. p.57

We need to be wary of always relying too heavily on informal opportunities for pedagogical interventions. There is a necessity to provide both informal opportunities as well as planned experiences which will engage all children in learning about language, vocabulary, the code, words, the way print works, the way texts work and the rewards that are inherent in literacy - needless to say in playful and non didactic contexts.

The evidence provided in our study and supported by Walkerdine (1990), suggests that the children most likely to benefit from informal opportunities to transform play into literate practices through pedagogical interventions, are those children who are well versed in how to display their literate competencies, who thus attract the teacher's attention, and who understand how to pick up on the teacher's involvement and instructional offers. As Walkerdine suggests, although the overt message of kindergarten and preschool discourse is embedded in child-centred pedagogy, covertly the discourse is more closely linked to the children's capacity to signify to teachers particular displays of knowledge, which can then be extended and regulated.

The following two excerpts from two sets of children demonstrate how differently some children respond to pedagogic interventions. In the first text we see Tessa playing in the sandpit with her friends.



It is evident how easily Tessa and her friends connect to the pedagogic intervention of teacher.

- Tessa: We gotta put the wires in somewhere. [Tessa role plays the phone ringing then answers the phone. My house is going to be on fire. [As an explanatory aside to Tch.]
- Tch: Who is in your house?
- Tessa: Me, Sophie and Julie.
- Tch: How did the fire start?
- Tch: What are you going to do?
- Tessa: Ring the firemen.
- Tch: (... inaudible...) [Talks through with Tessa what she would have to do.] The emergency number is 000. The address is...
- Tessa: [Interjecting] Doesn't matter!
- Tch: Yes it does!
- Tessa: What's an address?
- Tch: The number, the street, the suburb.
- Tessa: 50, Georgiefire Street
- Tch: I'll get some paper so you can make a sign.

If we compare this interaction with that of a group of boys in a different preprimary who are playing an imaginary game with the blocks and who take the play curriculum very seriously we see how the teacher's pedagogic offers are rejected as an intrusion.

- Tch: There seems to be a slight problem with the roof here. What's holding the roof up?
- Paul: The fence (...inaudible...)
- Tch: Where's the wind coming from? How does it get past the fence?
- Paul: It jumps.
- Tch: Since when can cars jump?
- Paul: (...inaudible...)
- Tch: So these are rather special cars then? [Paul nods and smiles and M joins them and listens. Alan continues to play to one side, silently rebuilding his structures until Tch addresses him directly.] Does your black car have writing on it? [No response from Alan.] Did you get that yesterday for your birthday?
- Alan: A squiggly pen.
- Tch: What does it look like?
- Alan: A pen.
- Tch: What's different about it then? [The boys smile at each other, realising that TCR doesn't understand about battery pens. Alan returns to his structures and starts to destroy them with his car.]

What this points to is that we cannot just rely on teaching at the point of need or using the "teachable moment". We also need to plan appropriate opportunities to ensure that all children in kindergarten, preprimary and early years classrooms have the chance to engage in a systematic way with print related play which includes scaffolding and support from a teacher.

## Conclusion

To conclude let me return to the premise I made at the beginning in answer to the question - Learning to be Literate: Whose responsibility is it? I hope through the discussion of what we know about literacy development, and what we can learn from past research, as well as the more recent research discussed in this paper, that it is evident that literacy is the responsibility of all who are involved in the endeavours of young children: parents, grandparents, childcare personnel, kindergarten, preprimary and early years teachers, educational policy makers and governments.

Those of us who have the privilege of working with children in the magic years of 0 to 8 have a particular responsibility to remember learning to be literate is not only the responsibility of the Years 1 to

3 teachers, but the responsibility of all of us. The years prior to school provide the foundation through which children must mediate the transition into literacy and it is the responsibility of us all to consciously, not leaving it to chance, help make a contribution to all children's growing awareness of texts and their meanings, sounds, letters, and words, in a manner which will build on what children learn in their homes. These experiences need to be powerful demonstrations of the rewards of literacy and require not only incidental intervention but planned experiences which will provide for those children who have not yet learned how to demonstrate what it is they need to know or have not yet acquired a taste for. Above all we must heed the advice of Garth Boomer when he reminded us that our ultimate goal must be to ensure that children will be active participants in taking responsibility for playing the literacy game.

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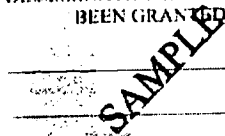
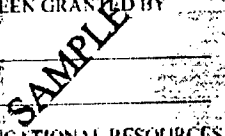




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